



Harden My Heart by redjadequeen

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Summary: Billy Hargrove has a big crush on Heather Holloway and is in deep denial about it. (no supernatural elements, deviates from canon, alternate timeline, pre-season 3, eventual smut, romance, drama, heather is rich, billy is a jerk.)

1. Chapter 1

Chapter One: Ask Me If I Care.

The thing about Heather Holloway is that she isn't supposed to be in Billy's life. He's tried so hard to make sure of that; works at it daily.

She's an upper class girl. A kind girl. A pretty girl. A girl with dark curls in a scrunchie, wearing bangles obnoxiously thick for her sharp wrists. Doe-eyes that people innately trust. Lips that curve in an enticing slope whenever she opens her sweet mouth. *Too* sweet. The kind of sweet that sinks into Billy's marrow like a cancer. He hates her immediately, avoids her at all costs, would rather bite off his own tongue than acknowledge her.

So for weeks they never say a single word to each other. The few times she lays eyes on him he shoots her a look so nasty that she averts her gaze instantly. He knows speaking to her would open the floodgates to some sort of inconceivable chaos. He doesn't know how he knows that, but the adrenaline that spikes whenever he sees the back of her dainty head is more than enough warning. He doesn't usually have that kind of reaction to anyone. To anything. The closest sensation is that stomach-turning awareness he gets when he hears his father's car pull into the driveway every evening. But that isn't really the same. This is different, more potent in its unfamiliarity.

It's been no use though. There's a cruel force that keeps her near him. They strangely enter senior year at Hawkins High on the same week in late October; have all the same dull classes; are exactly four rusty lockers away from each other. Their names are frequently called back-to-back during roll call. *Hargrove. Holloway* . They manage to arrive at and exit the same school doors at the same time everyday. It's a goddamn conspiracy. Being in Hawkins is already depressing enough, but Heather is the sticky icing on the bleakest cake. He can taste it, rich and heavy with something...what is it? *Trouble* . Definitely trouble. It's a relief that they live on opposite sides of town.

Despite all this purposeful avoidance, Billy has an uneasy gut-

sensation that one day their lives *will* collide. And that once they do, the force of the impact will decimate him, turning him to particles of ash.

It was only a matter of time.

Billy has his first real taste of Heather when he runs into her in the most unlikely place; his own front door step.

It's one of those lazy, drawn-out Sundays when it's just him and his younger step-sister Max biding time. It's mid November and freezing. Neil and Susan are out on their weekly shopping venture and Billy's not doing his homework like he said he would. Instead, he's pumping iron, blaring Van Halen; the clinking steel and pouring sweat a balm over the irritated sore that won't heal: that he's trapped in Hawkins. In *Hell*.

The doorbell rings and there's no chance he's going to answer it. Max *always* gets the door on Sundays. She's almost acceptable in that sense; most of the time she actually listens to him. *Most* of the time. He was going to work on that.

She stomps out into his workout space, blue eyes turbulent, red hair a flame behind her. "Yeah, yeah. I know, I'm getting it."

Billy's eyes are on the stucco ceiling, breathing tightly controlled, and the sudden awareness of David Lee Roth singing "*Ain't got no love that you'd call real*" bites into his current rep.

Then Max is saying his name. "Billy. *Billy!* "

Groaning, he sets his barbell down on the rack, feeling blood rush back into his hands. Max is by his side now, standing over him. The chill air rushing in from the open door makes his arms break out in goosebumps. "What?"

"Uh, a girl's asking for the adult of the house." She smirks, "I guess you're close enough?"

Billy runs a hand down his sweat-streaked face, reaches for a towel. "Jesus, it's probably just one of those donation assholes. Tell her to

fuck off." But Max is already half-way to her room, her small form disappearing behind a corner. Billy's too physically tired to yell at her just now; he'll tell her off later. He pulls himself up with a reluctant sigh, wiping the remnants of sweat from his brow. He trudges to the entrance, planning a little speech to get rid of the intruder. But then he sees just *who* 's standing in the doorway, profile to him, that curly hair blowing around her shoulders. *Heather Holloway*.

Fuck.

Heather's head turns, sees him; she smiles apprehensively. "Hi..." She's holding a thick stack of neon-yellow flyers in her arms.

Billy stalks into the doorway, the pulse in his ears deafening. For some reason his hands are clenched into fists, nail digging into palm. His eyes are steely as he gives her an unsettling once-over before snapping them to her heart-shaped face. "What do you want?" His own voice sounds disturbing to him.

"It's Billy, right?" Her smile doesn't falter, but her eyes can't quite seem to ever fully meet his. There's an uncomfortable pause as he glares at her in rigid silence. Her voice is fragile when she continues, struggles to find its footing. "Uh-I'm Heather. I think we're in the same class together? Well, classes. We've never really talked but I see you all the time. I mean, not all the time but-"

"*Why* are you *here*?" Billy drawls, agitated. He wants to shut the door in her face, shove her down the patio steps, or maybe snatch the flyers she's holding in her arms and tear them into tiny pieces.

Heather gets increasingly breathless. "Well, um- I'm going around town to supporting our local cat shelter, The Hawkins Independent Cat Society." Billy's watching a deep flush start to rise up her neck. She's holding out one of those damn flyers to him; He doesn't take it. "Um, winter's coming up so that means we're uh- looking for extra volunteers to take care of the influx of strays we usually get. And any donations that you could give would be so helpful. Even a dollar. We really need any help we can get."

Billy's arms cross as he leans against the doorway. He glances down at the paper, back to her, offers her a fake smile. "I *hate* cats." He's

lying but his tone could kill a small houseplant.

Heather's strained smile dissolves, her brow creasing. She snatches the paper to her chest. "Okay, well that's...unfortunate. Thank you for your time. Uh, see you..." She fades out, her expression dismal. "...*tomorrow* ." She does a quick turn and hurries down the steps, snatching her bike from off the grass, cramming the papers into her front basket.

Somehow her last sentence is more violent to Billy than any visual he just had of shoving her down the front stairs. He watches her departure, speeding off his front lawn like she can't get out of here fast enough. He un-clenches his fists, rolls his tense shoulders back, attempts to breathe fully. He slams the door shut, and it makes the windows rattle.

When Billy arrives at school on Monday, he's on the edge of a knifepoint. The day had barely begun but his anxiety is peaking, roiling in his gut. Five minutes after the first bell he loiters in the parking lot, leaning against his Camaro, fingers coiled around a cigarette while brisk wind whips at his hair. He stares out at the small sea of cars, hoping the chill and nicotine will numb his nerves.

He can't quite pinpoint where the tension is coming from. He knows he didn't sleep well last night, knows he didn't study for the math test this morning. He's thinking he'll probably do alright; he's good with numbers, but he wishes he had a firmer grasp of the curriculum. He's been flying by the seat of his pants since he arrived at Hawkins, above average on tests but never *quite* bothering with homework, skipping class every other day. He knows it'll catch up to him pretty quick.

He *also* knows that Heather will be there. Front row seat, all slim shoulders and cashmere, her hand raising every goddamn minute. He religiously sits in the last row, and always gets a clear view of the back of her head, her neck almost straining under all that thick hair. Sometimes his fingers itched to pull out that stupid scrunchie. Wanted to see her hair fall out in dark waves down her spine. Maybe yank at the locks and make her squeal. He wanted to know what she sounded like off kilter; not so pretty and perfect.

With that thought he sees her. She's on her bike as usual, rolling into the parking lot real smooth. It irritates the hell out of him. Can't her parents give her a ride or a car or something? She owns a freaking one-speed. It's beneath her, really.

His mind springs back to their awkward interaction yesterday. He had been a total dick; he's sure of it. But he had felt unable to react in any other way. He was usually pretty good with girls. Knew how to lay on the charm real thick, lower his voice and eyelids for that sultry effect. It didn't take much effort. He knew he had a natural gift and took pleasure in utilizing it. With Heather, he felt *weak*. Felt prickly and embarrassed before he even opened his mouth. It bewildered him. *Girls* were supposed to be the vulnerable ones.

She spots him and turns her head away. He immediately *hates* this reaction, which surprises him because her ignoring him was suiting him just fine a few days ago. That is, *before* yesterday's interlude. Billy tosses his cigarette butt, and starts towards the front doors. He walks slowly so Heather reaches the building way before he does.

To his surprise she cruises on up next to him and gets a little *too* close. He catches a whiff of her floral shampoo, sees the shine of her lip gloss, her handlebar nearly brushing against his arm. "You're late too, huh?"

"Yeah ?" He makes sure that his irritation is obvious.

"Race you there." She teases, bold unlike yesterday.

Hilarious. "I'm good, thanks."

She shoots him a lopsided grin, and Billy's heart-rate picks up a notch. "See you in class." She takes off, speeding to the front of the building; dismounting and locking up her bike up with a dexterity that impresses him. Billy stares as she strides through the front door with a kind of grace that only an athlete could have. He wonders if she dances, or does gymnastics. Something that would explain her agility, her posture, that *body* ...Billy grimaces, steeling himself against his own thoughts.

He seriously needs to stay the hell away from her.

Billy is the last person to arrive to Math class.

"Mr.*Hargrove*!Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to join us today."

Billy ignores Mr. Davis's sarcasm and notices that someone's taken his usual spot in the back. Of course the only desk available is right beside Heather. The conspiracy continues. He sits down in the empty seat, avoiding eye contact with her, running his eyes up her jean-clad legs under her desk.

"It seems you've forgotten your supplies." Mr. Davis says dryly behind his glasses.

Billy shifts in his chair, feeling everyone's gaze on him. He was so focused on getting to class that he had skipped going to his locker. "Would appear so.."

Mr. Davis sighs and scans the room. "Does anyone have a spare pencil?".

Billy hears a quiet snap as Heather opens her pencil case and rummages through it. He eyes her organized desk and sees that she has definitely *not* forgotten her school supplies. In fact, she has an overstock.

She passes him a pencil with a perfectly sharp tip. "Here." Her eyes are sympathetic and it makes Billy want to leave her hanging, but he takes it with a mumbled thanks.

"Alright, class." Mr. Davis begins handing out the tests, starting with Billy . "I *really* hope you've studied this weekend, because there's going to be a few surprises on this one."

Billy groans inwardly, starts skimming the test for signs of danger; frowns when he sees problems that he's destined to struggle with. He glances at Heather who's already scribbling furiously, white teeth piercing her bottom lip. He stares a little too long at her mouth.

"Do you need another pencil,Mr. Hargrove? Eyes on your paper."

Heather meets Billy's gaze for a second before he jerks his head away, disconcerted by the heat rising in his own face. Her eyes are always so damn *soft* , like melting hearts is her life's purpose. It was better when he could only see the back of her head.

After about five minutes, Billy realizes he's going to fail this test. Or at least shame himself. Math was his best class outside of Gym so it comes as an unpleasant surprise. He hadn't realized just *how* behind he was. He pushes awkwardly through it, exhales in relief whenever he finds an equation he understands. For an hour he feels like a complete idiot. By the time Billy reaches the last section, he's absolutely defeated.

Heather finishes first, curls bouncing as she springs up from her desk to place her paper on the teacher's desk. She gathers her stuff and Billy pretends he doesn't notice her ass when she walks past him. He gives himself permission to steal another glance as she leaves the room. This doesn't concern him *too* much as he probably would have had the same reaction to any girl with a good body. He should really stop thinking about her eyes though; pools of warm chocolate that threatened to brim over any second. He bets she cries easily, probably bawls at Pampers commercials. Billy *loathes* sappy chicks.

Billy realizes he's had his pencil hovering over one digit for several minutes. Jesus, he was off today.

Ten minutes later, he finishes the test to the best of his abilities, knowing he bombed it. He gets up and slams the paper down on Mr. Davis's desk, making him jump in his seat, glasses sliding down his nose. Billy grins and struts out into the hall, prepared for the worst.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter Two: My Uptown Girl.

Billy wrenches open his locker and winces at the piercing squeak it emits. He glances at Heather's locker four spots down from his, noticing the outside of it looks freakishly clean. He imagines her wiping it down in an OCD-driven panic. He's guessing *her* locker door probably opens soundless on well-oiled hinges.

He suddenly feels a tap on his right shoulder and spins his head around. It's Tommy H., standing on his left, grinning like an idiot. Billy smirks. He can't fucking *stand* this guy but tolerates his inane bullshit to enter somewhere on top of the school hierarchy. That shit *matters* to him. He needs the leverage for access to the better parties, the better chicks, the better pot; Tommy was his foot in the door, a necessary evil.

"Hey man, you going out with us tonight?" Tommy smacks his arm with his notebook and Billy flinches.

"It's *Monday*, Tommy." Billy says, mouth curling in a caustic twist. He reaches for his English textbook.

"So? Never stopped you before." This is true.

"*Yeah*, that was before the old man started taking my keys from me on school-nights. Can't go anywhere after eight now."

"Aw shit, last week was really that bad huh?"

Last time when they had gone drinking on a weekday, Billy had tried sneaking back into his house through his bedroom window, but ended up knocking over his record player, waking the whole house up. Neil was *not* pleased. He had shoved him into a wall, slapped him to tears; the *works* .

"It wasn't *good*." Billy says with mock lightness, slamming his locker door shut. He scans over Tommy's mean face, envisions smacking it

repeatedly. The guy was a goddamn nuisance. Especially since him and Carol had broken up. He seemed to follow him everywhere now; called him a few days ago just to *talk*. Billy refuses to take the bait. He wasn't a fucking shoulder to cry on and he wants Tommy in his life like he wants a skin rash. Thankfully, knowing him and Carol, they'll probably be back together in a week anyways. They both make their way towards English class together, a lingering silence present before Tommy breaks it.

"So...what do you think of *Heather*? You know, the brunette." Tommy asks, looking at him with anticipation, like he's expecting a fist bump or something just for mentioning her.

Jesus Christ, was the universe trying to fuck with him today? "I *don't*." Billy says louder than necessary. A few people in the hall glance at him.

Tommy lifts his brows. "Really? She's pretty cute, man."

Billy shrugs, raises his hand to touch the banner for The Hawkins Winter Dance as they walk underneath it. "You should know by now priss ain't my type."

"I dunno if she's a *priss*. I mean, she's a goody-good for sure, but she's pretty chill. You *really* wouldn't hit that?"

"Not a fucking chance." Billy enunciates slowly.

"Okay. Weird." Tommy eyes him suspiciously, evidently disappointed that he didn't have someone to congratulate him for his good taste. "Anyways, I'm thinking of asking her out to Teresa's party this weekend."

Billy clenches his jaw. There's no way in *hell* Heather would go for Tommy. Even he could see she was way out of his league. "Yeah, good luck with that." His tone is just plain mean.

Tommy sneers shark-like. "What's *that* supposed to mean, Hargrove?"

Billy casually fishes in his jean jacket pocket for a stick of gum. "Pretty little rich girl is gonna go for a pretty rich boy, isn't she? She wouldn't open her legs for anything less."

"Pffft, It's not like my family's broke or something. *Where* are you getting this from?"

"I know her type from a mile away. It'll take you a year to get to first base." Billy's blue eyes are gloating at Tommy's look of dismay. "That is, if she even lets you take a swing." He places the stick of gum in his mouth.

Tommy rolls his eyes. "Right. I see you've got her all figured out." He's clearly deflated though. Another long pause. "You know, she's on the swim team, right? She's pretty good. I saw her at practice once. *Real* talented. Legs for days." He looks at Billy with a lewd grin, expecting Billy to make some perverted comment in return.

Billy begins to picture Heather emerging dripping wet from a swimming pool, ripping the vision from his mind before it fully forms. "What, so you're stalking her now?"

Tommy scoffs. "No. Carol's also on the team. Caught a glimpse by chance. And now that Carol's old news, it's time to expand my horizons."

Tommy's overconfidence pisses Billy off to no end. "It's been five days, Tommy. Calm the fuck down."

"Speak for yourself, Hargrove. I've got *needs*."

Billy suppresses an eye-roll. Tommy's only slept with one girl in his entire life, yet acts like he's some kind of player. "Trust me, you ain't gonna get them met by *her*."

"How the fuck do you know this chick so well? Have you ever even talked to her?"

"Like I said, I know her type. Doesn't take a genius." The conversation ends at that, leaving Tommy frowning.

The rest of the day goes by much smoother than Billy anticipated. He gets the back row seat every class, gets a good view of Heather's head and shoulders from behind as per usual. Except this time he has to stop his eyes from lasering a hole into her skull, tearing his gaze away to stare unseeingly at the board in front of him.

They don't talk again all week.

Saturday night comes around on a bright full moon, and Billy works hard at beautifying himself in the mirror. His image reflects denim and leather, blonde waves perfectly coiffed, tan somehow still glowing. He looks like he's down to fuck. This of course, is absolutely his intention. He doesn't know who he intends on seducing tonight. He wasn't particularly interested in going after anyone from Hawkins High, after already going through the top of the heap. The chicks here were god-awful in his eyes compared to the fashionable babes back in California. He's kind of hoping some hot college girl will happen to be at Teresa's party. *Who the fuck even is Teresa?*

He knows he can't get wasted tonight. He had agreed to be the designated driver for Tommy and his group of moronic friends. So he plans to have just one beer, and get as stoned as humanly possible. He wonders if anyone in Hawkins has any good coke. Probably not.

He manages to escape his house without being spotted. Neil was too drunk to notice him leaving. If he *had* noticed him though, he probably would have gotten a good smack to the head for no reason. On the other hand, he might have gotten some extra cash for gas. Billy never really knew *what* he was going to get. He wouldn't take the chance though.

Billy rolls into Teresa's driveway around ten and the place is packed to the brim. It's a nice house, has a nice pool, a well maintained lawn with expensive ornaments that will likely be smashed or stolen by morning. When inside, the party is starting to take off, metallic synth pounding in his ear drums, drunk people laughing and hollering. Billy pushes through the dense crowd, and doesn't recognize most of the faces. Some of them are actually pretty cute though, so there's a chance he might find a good lay after all.

He finally finds Tommy who's alone on the cramped back-patio deck, leaning over the railing looking forlorn. He's staring out into the backyard garden area. Billy looks over to where Tommy's head is pointed and feels his gut turn.

There's Heather. Leaning on the shoulder of fucking *Steve Harrington* .

Of course.

He takes a few seconds to absorb this horrifyingly predictable picture, then creeps up on Tommy; slaps him hard on the back, making him splash most of his drink on the deck. "See, what'd I tell ya?" Billy leers. "Pretty rich girl goes for pretty rich boy."

"Jesus, Hargrove! Don't *do* that." Tommy punches Billy's arm, then grimaces at the spilled contents of his cup. He looks back out into the yard. "Okay, you got me. Maybe you had a point. But god, would you fucking *look* at them?" He gestures over to the duo.

Billy would really rather not but does anyway, immediately getting another fresh kick to his gut. Steve has his arm around Heather now and they're both laughing, looking like models in a Ralph Lauren commercial. Steve says something in her ear and she beams at him. They're so fucking cute it's nauseating. Billy wants to hurl already.

"Y'know, they almost look like they're related." Tommy quips bitterly.

Billy releases a harsh bark of laughter. "Yeah, well you know how these blue bloods like to keep things in the family."

Tommy looks at his near-empty cup with a wistful sigh then back to Billy. "I'm gonna go get hammered now." He begins ambling towards the kitchen.

Billy calls after him, scowling. "Look, I'm not going to hold your hair back later, so pace yourself, alright? If anyone throws up in my car again this is the last time I'm driving."

Tommy looks back with a dismissive eye roll. "Yeah yeah, I know. God, do you *ever* lighten up?"

Billy gives him a warning glance, then disappears in the opposite direction of the party.

Billy's been at this supposedly wild party for almost an hour and *still* hasn't found any pot. What the fuck is wrong with this town? Oh right, it's Hawkins. Apparently Tommy's dealer is coming out later that night but being from California, he's used to instant access. Plus

he's feeling *way* too damn sober. He's becoming aware of just how shallow and juvenile these parties actually are and one beer is just not going to cut it.

When he rounds the house to the pool area, his nose picks up the earthy musk of what he seeks, and he snaps his head in its direction. He nearly groans when he sees the source.

It's Steve and his new *girl*.

Steve and Heather are looking picturesque, standing and chatting by the blue glow of the pool, passing a joint under the full moon. Billy's riding a confidence boost from his beer buzz and decides to rain on their parade.

He strolls up to them, and when Steve's smile fades, Billy beams real wide.

"Hey *Stevie*, how's it going?" He's all false charm and knows it's obvious; doesn't care. He glances at Heather and feels an electric charge in his blood at the sight of her. She's wearing tight black jeans and a red lace blouse that brings out her natural color. Her face is made up, smokey lids and cherry lips. She looks older, hotter, disorientingly sultry. Billy looks her up and down a tad too openly before forcing his eyes back to Steve, who's glowering at him.

"It was going pretty good til' right about now." Steve deadpans. Billy notices Heather elbow him in the ribs and he can't believe that she's actually concerned about Steve being nice to him. He also notices that she's pretty damn stoned. To his surprise, Billy *likes* seeing her this way, eyes hooded and her demeanour a little undone, a little weird. He hadn't thought her the type to get high at all.

"Mind if I join you?" Billy expects to be shut-down but is so desperate for a toké that he doesn't give a fuck.

Steve starts to say something but Heather leans over and passes him the joint. Billy raises his eyebrows and takes it from her, their fingers brushing for a quick second. He sees the red ring of her lipstick on the paper and feels his stomach flip. He brings the doobie to his lips and takes a couple of deep inhales, looking up at the moon, knowing

this might be the only hit he gets all night.

"Yeah, c'mon man, don't bogart it." Steve motions his fingers to hand back the joint, and Billy does, exhaling smoke with a grin. It's serious quality kush. He's already euphoric. Billy senses Heather's gaze on him and he stares back into her big brown eyes, the weed loosening his boundaries. Tonight he really *looks* at her, fully taking her in as if for the first time, eyes skimming over her creamy skin, her soft red mouth. She's fucking *beautiful* . And she's not looking away. He licks his dry lips.

"Wasn't expecting to see you here." He mumbles. He hadn't planned to say anything to her, but he suddenly feels a fierce desire to hear her speak.

Heather smiles at him and motions her head towards Steve. "He dragged me out of the house."

Billy stiffens, snaps back to sharp reality. "Right..." He glances at Steve who looks like he's about to kick his ass. "Good stuff, Harrington. Seriously puts Tommy's dirt to shame." He slaps Steve on the arm just to bother him some more, and turns towards the house. He needs a warm body to melt into, and *fast* .

3. Chapter 3

Author's Note: This chapter contains smut.

Chapter Three: Play Slayer!

It turns out Teresa is the hot college chick Billy's been hoping for.

She finds *him*. Not long after he steps foot back inside the house, agitated and lusty, she makes a beeline in his direction. Starts up a conversation that he knows is going to end with him getting lucky. She even already knows his name. This strikes Billy as kind of creepy but in a town as shit as this any bit of flair or personality seemed to mark one as some type of celebrity.

She's cute. Redheaded. Nice rack. Billy doesn't need much coaxing. Their tongues are colliding before there's any thought on his part. She wants it *bad*. Tastes like rum and coke. She drags him upstairs to the bathroom, pushing him against the sink. Starts unzipping his jeans before he's even hard. The pot is doing that weird-ass thing of making him horny yet slow to respond. It's okay. She has clever hands and gets to work like it's her job to please him. Billy likes her enthusiasm.

He finally gets it up, but his mind is elsewhere. On a certain brown eyed, curly-haired vixen. She wasn't close to that in Billy's mind yesterday but tonight she's a fucking vixen. He can't stop thinking about her mouth, the way her jeans cling to her hips. How he could see her skin through the red lace of her top. The weed is making it easy for him to imagine, to visualize. He imagines that pretty mouth on him and starts to leak in Teresa's hand.

He closes his eyes as Teresa takes him on her tongue, starts sucking eagerly. She's good. Has better technique than any of the high school chicks he's been with in Hawkins.

He wonders if Heathers done this before, what she'd be like. Would she be bashful, shy? Or would she take him in greedily like Teresa is now.

A pang of guilt hits him, like Heathers too good to ever go down on him like this. Like she'd want a bed of roses. Want someone to...make love to her or something. He snaps his eyes open and sees Teresa's bobbing head, watches the soft flesh of her cleavage as she gives him one of the better blowjobs he's had in a while.

He's close. Shuts his eyes again, this time imagining Heather taking him just as passionately as Teresa. It does the trick. He convulses, letting himself spill into her throat without warning. She doesn't seem to mind; swallows easily, maintains eye contact, seeming to enjoy the whole process. Billy's probably going to ask for her number after this.

A few minutes later Billy leaves the bathroom with Teresa's digits scrawled on his wrist in ballpoint. He sets out to find Tommy, body tingling in its afterglow, Heather's lithe form still on his mind.

The fucker is nowhere to be found. Billy's doing a constant circle of premises, looking for a shark-faced scumbag that's supposed to acquire the rest of tonight's pot. Although, after the blowjob he's pretty much ready to go home, his reason for coming here already fulfilled.

Billy isn't that surprised when he finds Tommy sprawled in the basement bathroom. The basement where the seedier drugs are being passed around. Billy is *not* going to try anything that's being snorted down here. Who knows what the fuck that stuff is cut with.

Billy leans against the door frame. "You're a predictable motherfucker, Higgins, you know that?"

Tommy's retching, moaning into the toilet. Looks up at Billy with a sweat-wet face. "Sorry, man, fuck..."Shouldn'ta had all those jello shots. And then....the fuckin' keg...s stupid." He gazes blearily at Billy's eyes for a moment.. "...you fuckin' stoned man?"

Billy actually still is, and it's making this situation more tolerable than it should be."Best shit I've had since I got to this fuckin' town."

"Larry's comin' man. S' coming here. S' gonna get us good stuff. Gotta wait."

Billy snorts. "Fuck *that* shit. We're leaving." He'd much rather leave Tommy lying in his own vomit, but he's not about to ditch the guy who could send him spiralling to the bottom of the social ladder by Monday.

Tommy rests his head against the toilet seat. "Need water. Gimme water."

Billy frowns at the command, but he needs Tommy in the best condition possible before he lets him anywhere near the Camaro. He sighs showily before leaving the room. "Yeah yeah, I'll get you fucking water, *jesus*."

He finds a cup from the basement kitchen-cupboard and fills it to the brim with tap water, feeling all eyes on him. Goes back to the bathroom and squats next to Tommy, handing it to him. Tommy gulps it down within seconds.

"Here's the deal." Billy sneers, yanking Tommy's cup from his fingers and slamming it on the bathroom counter. "I'm taking your drunk ass home. I'm *not* bringing any of your idiot friends 'cause the last thing I need is another asshole to baby. Puke in the car; you're walking. Got it?"

Tommy giggles, absorbing nothing. Billy seizes Tommy's collar and wrenches him off the floor, forcing him to stagger upright. "Can you even *stand*?" He grimaces as Tommy leans against him, head lolling onto his shoulder. "Shit."

Tommy's still snickering, like he's trying to rub it in. "You're always....so *sad*, man. Why so *sad*?"

"If anyones sad right now it's *you*, asshole." Billy yanks Tommy's arm around his neck, grumbling. "Jeez, you weigh a fuck-ton. You better be giving me free pot for *life* after this."

"Les' go, man." Tommy lumbers forward as though trying to lead roughly pulls him back.

"You follow *me*, idiot."

Billy drags Tommy's stumbling weight across the basement, saucer-

eyed druggies around the room leering at them.

"Higgins is fuckin' w-w-wasted!" A Hawkins High kid with rat-tail hair crows from one of the couches. "You gonna tuck him into bed too, Hargrove?"

"I'll tuck my foot up your ass, moron." Billy snarls, canines showing. He hauls Tommy's futile body up the stairs, swearing under his breath the entire way. "You owe me *big time*, fuckhead."

Getting Tommy into the Camaro is no easy feat. Carrying him is the equivalent of dragging a heavy sack of writhing potatoes around. Billy's tempted to abandon him face down in the driveway. It's a miracle when he finally wrestles Tommy's limbs into the passenger's seat.

"Billyyyyy, play *Slayer*!" Tommy whine-yells with his eyes closed as Billy settles into the driver's seat, slamming the door shut behind him. "Play *Slayerrrrr*!".

"Gimme a sec, asshole." Billy reaches into his jacket for his pack of Marlboro's. He's never needed one more.

To his dismay Tommy already has the glove compartment open, pawing through his cassettes with zero delicacy, a few of them clattering as they hit the car floor. "Where-where is it... Hargrove..*Slayer*..."

"What the hell are you doing!" Billy smacks Tommy's hand away from his prized possessions.

"PLAY SLAYER!"

"Shut the *fuck* up." He reaches across and grabs *Show No Mercy* from the compartment, other hand sticking the scattered tapes back in their proper place. He turns the ignition on and crams the cassette into the tape deck. "Happy now?" Every atom in his body wants to punch Tommy in the throat.

"Fuck yeahhhh!" Tommy moans as the opening to "Evil Has No Boundaries" thuds into their bones. Billy nearly breaks Tommy's arm

when he leans over and makes the devil-horns sign in his face.

Tommy clutches his shoulder, scowling. "*Asshole ...*"

"One more peep outta you and I'll tear it right out of its socket." Billy grumbles around his cigarette as he lights up, puffing smoke with a sigh of relief as nicotine and thrash-metal course through him. Then he adjusts his rearview mirror and has a woeful realization.

Steve Harrington's car is right behind him.

"You've *gotta* be kidding me." Billy looks over his shoulder through the back window. Steve is sitting in his car. With Heather in the passenger seat. Billy bites the inside of his cheek when he sees Steve lean in and kiss her.

Billy glares at a head-banging Tommy. "Touch anything and you're dead. Got it?" He wrenches open his door, hinges squeaking, steeling himself for the cherry on top of this shit sundae of an evening. He strides up to Harrington's car and raps his knuckles in an aggressive rhythm against the glass by Steve's head, making the lovebirds startle, two pairs of glazed eyes blinking at him.

Steve presses his lips together and shakes his head in annoyance, rolling down his window. "Can I help you?" The whites of his eyes are red and glassy.

Billy pulls from his cigarette and leans down to Steve's eye level, palm pressed into the top of the door frame. He exhales a white haze into the car, his voice charmingly hostile. "Hate to ruin the moment, pretty boy, but you're *blocking* me. Mind moving the fuck out of the way? Got shit to do." He avoids looking at Heather.

"Yeah whatever, Hargrove. Calm your tits." Steve huffs, digging his keys out of his pocket.

Billy's about to return to his car before Heather's gentle voice cuts through him like a knife. "Hey, Billy, um-have you thought of trying out for the swim team?" This is the last question he expects from her. Their eyes meet and Billy feels that too-intimate spark again. She's still stunning. Still high as a kite. "Carol said you were a lifeguard in

California or something. You know, we could always use another strong swimmer. Steve's on the team too, actually." Steve's gawking at her like her words are a personal offense. Heather doesn't seem to notice, her gaze still on Billy.

"Pretty sure we've got enough swimmers, Heath'." Steve mutters, sticking his keys in the ignition and starting the engine.

Billy's smug as he scans over that damn lace top again. "Not likely, princess. Gotta give Harrington a chance to shine at *something*." He smacks Steve's shoulder through the window. "Later, stoners."

He turns and heads back to the Camaro, unable to suppress the onset of butterflies he feels at Heather's suggestion, that she even thought to ask him at all. But he'd rather burn in hell than wear one of those stupid swim caps, even if it meant seeing Heather's half-naked form on the regular. Some things just aren't worth the humiliation.

Snow arrives in Hawkins the first Monday of December, a bitter chill on its tail. It's miserable. Billy doesn't like how he has to bundle up. How he has to hide his skin. Doesn't like how his teeth chatter in the cold. It's not a good look.

Despite his ignorance of shit weather, Billy's prepared. Neil bought him snow tires a month ago. Neil's a North Dakota boy. Knows to get these things ahead of time. Billy hasn't seen snow since he visited Neil's parents as a kid, and he's not looking forward to the inevitable shovelling of the driveway, to the black ice Neil says is likely to form on the roads soon. Hell, the entire six months ahead of him is looking pretty damn bleak.

After school, the snow's coming in fast and sticking. Billy exits the front doors and treks through the mostly-empty parking lot towards his Camaro, itching to blast Metallica and heat. Billy had detention for smoking in the boy's locker room, forced to stay after class to do "homework." Which basically meant drawing cartoons all over the inside of his binder for an hour.

Inside his car, properly satiated by electric guitars and the smouldering cigarette perched in his mouth, he pulls out of his

parking space and cruises towards the exit. He feels oddly careful with the new crystallized surroundings.

Then his eyes catch a sorry sight in his periphery.

Heather's on her cherry-red bike, attempting to make her way through the falling snow. She's actually doing a pretty good job, practically sailing, but it infuriates him. She's a fucking idiot.

A really cute one.

Billy slows down next to her, drumming his fingers on the steering wheel for a few seconds, contemplating if he's really going to do this or not. He caves, mumbling "Fuck it." under his breath. He rolls down his window, a few icy flakes hitting his lashes.

"You're not *seriously* planning to ride that piece of junk through this, are you?" Billy drawls over the noise coming from his speakers. He notices that Heather's hair is damp, and he cringes inside at the how cold her head must be right now.

"I'm from Connecticut. This is nothing." Heather glances at him before looking straight ahead.

Of *course* she's from Connecticut, rich little bitch. "Your boyfriend ditch you or something?"

Heather comes to a stop and Billy does the same in turn. She looks more haughty than necessary. "He's *not* my boyfriend, we're just dating. And it was only the girls swim practice today. He's probably already home."

Billy tries to ignore the relief he feels at her reluctance to call Steve her boyfriend. "Look, throw the bike in the back and I'll give you a ride, kay?"

"Really?"

Billy takes a drag, putting on his most aloof face. "I mean, if you wanna get hypothermia then go right ahead."

"Alright. If you *insist*." Heather grins. She dismounts and Billy climbs

out, rounding the car to open the trunk. "You think the trunk is big enough?"

"Sure it fucking is. Just leave the hood up." Billy says, Marlboro in hand. He pops the lid open. " 'Course, normally I wouldn't be caught *dead* doing this, but it's only a ten minute drive. Otherwise I'd leave you here." Billy grabs the bike from Heather's hands and positions it tight inside the trunk, red titanium and wheels sticking out like a sore thumb, hood gaping open awkwardly. They both stop and stare for a moment, white powder already forming on the handlebars.

"*Yup*. Looks tacky as shit." Billy narrows his eyes and takes one last drag from his cigarette before tossing it in the snow. "Let's go before I change my mind."

"How do you know it takes ten minutes?" Heather asks as Billy walks past her to the driver's seat.

"I dunno, doesn't everyone know you live in Scrooge-ville? Get in. I'm freezing my ass off out here." He steps inside and the door shuts painfully loud after him.

Heather ambles to the passengers side, adjusting her ponytail in the glass before slipping into warmth and Metallica's pounding rhythm.

4. Chapter 4

Author's note: This chapter contains smut.

Chapter Four: Who's Gonna Drive You Home?

When Heather enters the car Billy realizes he's not ready for this moment. She seems equally unprepared, doesn't look at him as she puts her seatbelt on. He turns down the volume on the music, assuming she's going to hate it.

"You don't have to do that."

Billy raises a brow. "You a fan or something?"

"Nope." She cringes. "What even is this?"

"Metallica."

"Sounds like...death."

"That's kinda the point."

There's an uncomfortable silence besides the steely whine of electric guitars. Billy shifts gears and glances at Heather. She's still looking away from him. He quickly scans over the black wool of her jacket, the elegant slope of her profile, the way a tendril of hair falls over her brow. She looks pretty. Really fucking pretty. Smells nice too. His stomach does that flipping thing he's starting to hate.

Billy coasts to the exit and makes a right turn, flicking up the speed on his windshield wipers as white flakes plummet into his field of vision. He realizes that Heather gets to watch him drive through snow for the first time. Not ideal, but it's not like he cares. Or at least he *shouldn't* care.

He can't stand how damn quiet she is. Usually chicks are gabbing his ear off by now. "So...how's swimming?"

"Oh." She hesitates. "It's okay, I guess."

"Well, that doesn't sound very enthusiastic." The snow's not that bad. It's almost like he was expecting the road to pull out from under him with the way Neil kept going on about black ice. Billy speeds up.

"I guess I'm just kinda bummed about it today."

"And why's that?" He hates that he actually wants to know.

She pauses for a second before opening up. "I'm just not doing my best this week. It's stupid. I mean, I haven't lost a race yet, but I keep going under my usual time. I feel like I'm underperforming."

Billy gives her a cynical look. "Something tells me you *always* feel like that."

"What do you mean?"

He shrugs. "I dunno, you've got this *vibe* about you."

"What kind of vibe?"

"Like if I looked away for a second you'd start organizing my cassettes or something."

Her tone sharpens. "Yeah right, you should see my room."

Billy looks at her. She's glaring at him, an expression he hasn't seen on her before. He instantly likes it, wants more. "I bet you have like *one* sock on the floor and the rest is sparkling. That to you would be a mess."

"Not true, and even if it was It's not like there's anything wrong with a clean room. I mean, yours is probably disgusting."

Oh, so she *does* get sassy. The corner of his mouth twitches as he reaches into his jacket for another cigarette. "So you're telling me that you're only Little Miss Perfect at school?"

"What are you talking about?"

Billy decides to dig into her for the hell of it, see if she squirms. "Your hand is always up in class like you're gonna fucking *die* unless you

answer every stupid question. You're on every goddamn team and committee the school has to offer. You're every teacher's favorite pet." He points his unlit cigarette at her. "I'm pretty sure you actually polish your locker like some kind of *spaz*."

She scoffs. "Just because I participate at school doesn't mean-

"Bet you iron your panties."

That sets her off, her tone shrill. "I do *not* ! And what, are you like, *watching* me or something? What makes you think you know so much?"

"Nothing." Billy says innocently, fishing his zippo lighter out of his pocket. "Just observant."

"Okay. Alright. Well, you've *also* got a vibe." She pokes him hard in the arm. Billy gets a kick out of it, his body heating up at her getting in his personal space.

"Oh yeah? Like what?" He lights his cigarette, eyes on the horizon as he exhales smoke in front of him. He doesn't open his window just to see if it annoys her.

"Like you're too cool for school."

Oh, *good one*, Heather. "Well, I won't deny that."

"Like you *hate* everybody."

"I hate stupid people" Billy shifts his gaze to her as they hit a red light. It's hard not to stare at the subtle pout of her mouth. "It's not my fault that's the majority."

"Well maybe if you actually *talked* to people you'd find that they weren't stupid and that you're just really judgemental." She's leaning towards him, eyes flashing. Billy has a powerful urge to yank her to him and kiss her. See how fiery she *really* gets.

"Sounds like a goddamn waste of time to me."

Heather sinks back into her seat, glaring silently out the window for a

good minute, watching the houses whiz by them. Billy wonders if he went too far before she speaks again. "You're totally regretting giving me a ride, aren't you? I knew this would happen."

He's actually not at all. He's savouring every second of getting under her skin. "What do you mean, you *knew* ?"

"I know I've never been your cup of tea. You've always looked at me like I'm the worst, and now that I know you actually think I *am* ..."

Billy keeps his expression bored, flicking ash into the dirty paper cup that's in the holder. "I look at everyone like that. Don't flatter yourself."

"Charming."

"If it makes you feel any better, I hate your boyfriend a hundred times more than I hate you."

"Wow, *thanks* ."

"What's the attraction to that moron anyways?" Billy's been itching to ask since the party, though he's not sure if he actually wants an answer.

"Steve's *not* a moron. He's sweet, he's funny, he takes me places. He's a good guy."

His fingers tighten on the wheel, knuckles white. "That's the most boring thing I've ever heard."

"Oh? And what would be better criteria?"

Billy goes for the jugular. "Can he *fuck*?"

"What? Ew!" Heather smacks his arm, making him grin. He just couldn't resist pushing her over the edge. And now that he knows it makes her touch him, he's going to do it again and again.

"I'm guessing that's a no."

"It's none of your business!" She's clearly appalled. Face red. Billy laps

it up.

"Mmm. *Definitely* a no."

"You're disgusting!"

Billy can't stop smirking, rolls down the window to toss his cigarette butt. "I think you just can't handle the truth."

Heather bursts into laughter. "What the heck, were you raised in a barn or something?" She puts her face in her hands, shaking her head. "You are a freaking *trip*."

He didn't expect her to laugh. He wants more of that too. He milks it further, voice teasing. "Yeah, you like that?"

"Hmm, I dunno." She does a sardonic pause, like she's actually considering. "I'll have to think about that one."

"You already know you do, but I'm sure you'll be thinking about me anyways." Billy peeks at her. She's blushing, eyes glued to the road. Billy decides he's won.

The sun begins to set and the landscape shifts. Massive houses appear, huge expanses of lawn, winding driveways. The snow's starting to dwindle into slow speckles against his windshield. "So we're in Rich-ville now. Which place is yours?"

"What, you don't know that too?" Heather mocks.

"I guess stalking isn't my forte after all."

She gives a big sigh, but Billy knows she's enjoying the banter. He can tell by the way she's still blushing, by the way she leans on the armrest towards him. She gestures ahead. "Keep going til you hit Chestnut. It's the second house on the left.

Billy does exactly that, and when he pulls over to the side of the road, his eyes widen. "Jesus, your place is huge." It's definitely a mansion. White, and pure. A roundabout and a fountain in the front. Billy hates it. "How many servants do you have, like twenty?

Heather offers him a withering glare. "We have one housekeeper and a cook." She opens the car door, stepping out into the cold. Billy follows suit, gaze penetrating into the walls of her sprawling house, like he's trying to see through it. He knew she was loaded but this is a shock to the system.

He circles to the back of the Camaro. Heather's already lifting her bike out of the trunk before he can help her.

"Why don't your parents give you a car?" Billy shuts the trunk door after her wheels touch the pavement. "Not like they can't afford one."

She gives him one of those holier-than-thou expressions that makes him remember why he hated her at first sight. Except now he definitely wants to rip the bike out of her hands and kiss that look off her face. "Because I don't *want* one. I like riding my bike."

Billy rolls his eyes, leans against the side of the Camaro with his arms folded. "Gonna be kind of a shit time over the coming months, don't you think?"

"Well. Yeah." She admits.

"You know, if you need a ride..."

Heather winces. "I dunno, I think that would be kinda weird for Steve."

Billy can't help but get pissed at that, his whole body tensing. "Thought you said he wasn't your boyfriend."

"I guess you calling him that *constantly* changed my mind." Heather quips, sweeping snow off her bike.

Billy snorts, annoyance dripping from him. "Okay. Well, just don't expect a ride from me when you're caught in the snow on that thing again."

"Hey, I was doing just fine. *You* were the one that offered."

He ignores that point. "Does Harrington drive you to school?" He knows no matter what answer she gives he's going to be mad about

it.

"Sometimes?"

Billy's reaching in his jacket for yet another Marlboro. There's something about this chick that makes him want to chain-smoke like his life depends on it. "So your own boyfriend doesn't even give you a ride?"

"We like, just started dating. We're taking things slow."

Billy's eyes bore into hers. "Anyone I'd date would get a ride to school and back *daily*, no question. What kind of dip-shit lets his girl bike in the cold for like an hour?"

Heather shrugs, looks at the snow-covered pavement. "It's more like twenty-five minutes, but-"

"It's still *shitty*."

They glower at each other. The snow's completely stopped now. The light slipping away.

"Look, I'm gonna go." Heather starts walking her bike in the direction of her house, glancing back. "Thanks for the ride. See you at school tomorrow."

Billy's already opening the driver's door, cigarette between his lips. "Yeah, whatever. Don't freeze your tits off on the way there."

He slams the door shut and guns the engine, shooting off into the gathering dark.

The rest of the week is torture. Heather and him don't talk again. It's obvious she's avoiding him. It's almost like the ride never happened. Billy kinda blames himself. He knows he crossed multiple lines. He doesn't regret it. It had been the most exciting thing that's happened to him since he arrived in this shithole. Last time he felt that high was when he took a tab of acid and then rode a huge wave back in San Diego. Life gets boring real fast after something like that.

He's sure Heather feels it too. A spark. A flame. A fucking explosion. Hell, he knows he's been feeling it for weeks but was too damn stupid to admit it to himself. He doesn't like to think about that too much. It only makes him feel like shit.

So he soldiers on. Smokes more than normal. Drinks more than he should. Calls Teresa up and fucks her in the back of his Camaro. It doesn't help. Heather never leaves his mind.

Yeah, he's aware he could never really have her. He's not a fucking idiot. He knows who he is. Where he is. Who he's going to become. He knows who Heather's going to become too, and he'd only hold her back. Hurt her. Fuck her up. She's too smart for that. She's probably thought this type of thing through, knows what's good for her. That's why she's with Steve. They're perfect for each other.

Except for the fact that she'd much rather fuck him than Steve.

Okay, maybe he's projecting there, but he could have sworn that's what she wanted at the party, what she wanted when he made her blush. Steve is just arm candy. He's absolutely sure of this. He tells himself this a lot. Especially when he sees Steve at her locker, holding her hand, making her laugh.

Billy's not sure how much longer he can take it.

On Friday night, Billy's in his room. He's not alone. Teresa is lying face down on his mattress while he rocks into her from behind. Susan is in the next room so he tries to keep quiet, not moving fast or hard enough to make the bed squeak. Teresa won't stop whimpering. She's fucking annoying. Billy has to slap his hand over her mouth and tell her to shut up. He's pretty sure that this'll be the last time he fucks her. He's getting real tired of her shit. Plus, her eyes are too green, her hair too red. Billy's decided he prefers brunettes.

The phone rings. He keeps thrusting.

Then someone's knocking on his door and he freezes. "What?"

"Billy, phone's for you. It's a girl from school." Susan's voice is muffled

through the door. "Says her name's Heather?"

"*Fuck*." He pulls out immediately. "Yeah I'll be there in a minute!" He gets up and grabs his jeans, pulling them on while he yanks his shirt out from underneath Teresa. She looks *pissed*. He grins at her. "Sorry, doll. Be right back."

He shuts his bedroom door behind him and makes a quick line to the empty kitchen, picking up the phone that Susan left lying on the counter. He puts the receiver to his ear and smiles, his whole body buzzing.

"How the hell did you get this number?"

"And hello to you too." Heather says softly. She has a good phone voice, sweet and husky. Billy's mind is going to really dirty places already. That's her fault though for interrupting him while he's balls deep in some college girl. He's still hard. "There's this thing called a phonebook."

"Huh, you don't say." He twines his fingers around the phone cord, words dripping honey. "Well, that's real cute. You uh- lonely or something? Need some company?"

He hears her annoyed exhale. "Nope."

The lack of blood in Billy's head is giving him a very narrow focus. "I figure it gets pretty isolating in that big shiny house you got there. Sorta get why you're so uptight now. I think maybe you need somebody to pay you a special visit. Help you to relax for once." Billy lowers his voice. "You know, get you nice and we- "

Heather clears her throat loudly. "Actually, I was gonna ask you for a favor. A big one."

"I was just getting to that." Billy purrs.

She ignores him. "You're going to laugh."

"Oh yeah?"

"I um...I need a ride."

Billy smirks, ardour cooling. "Yeah, that's pretty damn funny. You know a ride to school ain't the same as me being your personal chauffeur, right?"

"I know. Look, I'm at the cat shelter. There was a staff Christmas party and I volunteered to stay behind and clean up. Rode my bike home for like a minute and the chain broke. So now I'm back here, and like...yeah.."

Billy notices she's slurring slightly. "You been drinking?"

"I mean, I had a few glasses of wine and I'm a lightweight but nothing crazy."

"Why can't Harrington give you a ride?"

"I uh- I dunno. Haven't called him yet..." She drifts off. "Technically, you're closer. And from what I remember you seem to like giving rides?"

He chuckles, totally thrilled that she called him over Steve. "Not *really*. Where's this place again?"

"Glenn and Halford. Blue building. Has a big cat painted on it."

"Uh-huh." Billy drawls, leaning against the counter. That actually is pretty close.

"You know, if it's too much of a hassle I'll just call Steve. Or like, walk."

Billy tenses his jaw. "I'll give you a ride."

He hears her breathe a sigh of relief. "Thanks so much. It'd really help me out."

"Right. Well, don't get too wasted before I show up. I get pretty impatient with that shit." Unwanted memories of hauling Tommy into his car come to mind. Though the idea of having to carry Heather around sort of turns him on.

"You? Impatient? Hard to imagine."

"I'm a real saint, I know. Kay, I'm leaving now. Be there in like, twenty minutes."

"See you soon."

Billy hangs up the phone and returns to his room where Teresa is still lying. He climbs on top of her with renewed fervor, making her whine when he slides into her again. For the next couple of minutes he pretends it's Heather who's clenching around him with every thrust. He forgets to not make the bed squeak.

5. Chapter 5

Chapter Five: No More Love On The Run.

When Billy arrives at the faded building of the Hawkins Independent Cat Society, he's excited.

Teresa's perfume still hangs in the air of the Camaro. He had dropped her off, then had driven here as fast as possible in the snow, wanting to follow through on the time he had given Heather. Teresa didn't care about how he had kicked her out of his house as soon as he came. She just wanted to fuck. At least that's what he tells himself. Guilt isn't something Billy does well. Not like he's gonna see her again anyways.

He can see the twinkle of Christmas lights in the shelter as he gets out of the car. When he approaches the front door he feels like he's going to burst out his skin. Heather opens the door before he can even knock. The first thing Billy always notices about her are those doe eyes; right now they're teasing. She's definitely had a few.

"Hey there, mister..."

"Hey yourself." He leans on the doorframe, panning over her outfit. She's wearing one of those stupid oversized Holiday sweaters; a cat wearing a Santa hat on it. Her hair is up and disheveled. Big hoop earrings. Cheeks rosy. Lips wine-stained.

"Want me to show you some *cats*?" She points her thumb behind her.

Billy gives a lopsided grin. "Not really, but you're cute enough right now that I might let you."

Heather looks unimpressed. "Oh yeah, I forgot. You're the cat-hater."

"Nah. You were just even more annoying than usual that day."

"And you are charming as ever." She steps back and lets him in. "Let me at least show you Rum Tum Tugger. He's been keeping me company."

The place looks better on the inside. The room is half-lit, filled with tacky ornaments. He can hear meowing in the distance. There's a bunch of couches. A front desk with a miniature Christmas tree on it. An oversized orange tabby pads over to him and Billy instinctively leans down to pet it.

"Rum-Tum's the boss in these parts." Heather mumbles.

Billy likes cats. He'd pick a cat over a dumb dog any day. Had a white one named Luna when Mom was still in the picture. He still misses her. Almost as much as he misses Mom. "Stupid as fuck name, but he's cool."

"Want a cookie?" Heather motions to the front desk where there's an overflowing tray of goodies covered in plastic-wrap. She has a child-like quality tonight that's more than endearing. Billy could kiss her right now.

"I'm good."

She flops down in one of the oversized couches. He's glad that she's not in a hurry.

"I'm a little tipsy."

"Yeah, i can see that." He sits down next to her, keeping a good distance between them. He intends to get closer.

"How can you tell?"

"You're being too nice to me."

"I'm a nice person." She states this as a sincere fact, eyes honest. Those eyes are doing something to him right now. He resolves in that moment to kiss her sooner than later.

"I must bring the sass out in you then."

Rum Tum Tugger jumps up next to Billy. Sniffs him before settling into his lap.

"Aw, he likes you!"

"He's an idiot." Billy scratches the purring tabby's ears, looking around the room, taking in the staff pictures on the bulletin board. Heather's on there, beaming with a Siamese cat in her arms. He doesn't get how someone can be so involved in community after only being here for a month. Just adjusting to a new school was a lot for him.

Heather's staring at him. She's so open right now. "Thanks for coming by the way."

"Yeah, it's no big deal." He puts an arm on the back of the couch, beginning his journey towards her. "So you gonna tell me why you called me first?"

"I told you already. You were closer."

"Seems like only half the story to me."

"You're also kind of funny." She shrugs, suddenly absorbed in picking lint off the cushions.

"Hmm, you didn't seem to think that last time I gave you a ride." He keeps his voice low, soothing. He has to build this carefully.

"I mean, you're also kind of a *jerk* but I'm okay with it."

"You like it."

"It amuses me."

Billy smirks. "You're adorable."

Heather pokes his arm, changing the conversation. "Hey you know what I was thinking?"

"What?" Billy likes that she's touching him. This is a good start.

"You should join the swim team."

Oh, here we go. "Told you already. Not gonna happen."

"Why not?" Heather pouts.

"I'm more of a surfer than a swimmer. And swim caps give me nightmares."

"You surf?"

"Yeah, all the time back in San Diego." Billy wants to shift an inch towards Heather, but Rum-Tum won't budge.

"That's so neat." Heather leans her elbow on the back of the couch, chin perched in her hand.

Billy hasn't told anyone in Hawkins yet about his love of surfing. Talking about it now makes him homesick. "Yeah, it was fun."

"But you were a lifeguard too?"

"Had to get a car somehow." Neil barely chipped in to help him get a car. Told him that saving for it would help him build character. It did, but Billy still holds it against him.

"Did you like being a lifeguard?" Heather seems genuinely interested.

He grimaces. "Ehh not really. Helped me meet chicks, I guess. Kids are assholes."

Now she's inching towards him, face eager. "We should race each other. At swimming I mean."

He didn't see that coming. "Why?"

Her eyes light up, mouth in a sweet smile. "Because I like a challenge and I feel like you'd be good at it."

She's *such* an over-achiever. "*Maybe*, princess. I dunno." He gives her a smug look. "But yeah, you're right. I'm good."

Her smile fades. "Don't call me that."

"Call you what?" He feigns innocence.

"Princess."

"Why not?" He glances at her red mouth, lingers there for too long.

Pretending he doesn't want her isn't an option for him anymore.

"I dunno, it's a name for like a *girlfriend* or something." Heather's lips are lined with some kind of gloss that he wants to taste. Billy can't decide whether he likes her lips or her eyes more.

"I call lots of girls princess." This isn't true. He saves that word for the girls he'd take home to Mom she was still around. They're few and far between. She should consider herself lucky.

"That's so sleazy."

"They seem to like it."

"Just...don't." She shifts away from him, plays with the edge of her sweater.

"Okay, whatever."

She's silent for a moment, runs her gaze over him until his skin tingles. "You miss it? California?"

"Every damn day."

"Yeah, I feel the same." She sighs.

"About what?"

"I miss Connecticut." Heather's voice is tinged with a longing that Billy feels right in his chest.

"Yeah?"

She gives him a gentle smile. "Yeah I miss the ocean."

That nostalgia he usually tries to suppress hits him hard now. It hurts. He can taste the salt water, feel the grit of sand under his feet. "Fuck, me too."

"You gonna go back?"

"Yup, counting down the days."

She looks relieved, breathes out slow. "Same. I can't wait to get out of here."

Billy has a moment of clarity. Heather and him might actually have something in common.

Heather touches his arm again, an impish look in her eyes. "You should join the swim team."

She's turning him on now. He wants her hands all over him. ""You're *pushy* when you drink."

"I'm not even drunk, I'm just a little loose." She wiggles her head from side to side with a coy smile.

"Yeah, I dig it, hun. Though kinda miss stone cold sober you getting pissed at me." Billy needs to start closing the deal now, or it might not happen. He shifts closer to her, pushing Rum-Tum off his lap. He lands on the floor with a sharp meow.

"Well, just keep being you and I'm sure it'll happen."

Billy chuckles and she grins back at him. They stare at each other for too long before Heather turns away, face flushed. Billy scoots over another inch, their thighs now touching. He goes in for the kill.

"You're real pretty, you know that?" His timbre is deep, well-practiced.

Heather's eyebrows raise. She still can't make eye contact.

"Um." She gives a nervous laugh. "Thanks."

"I'm gonna be honest with you."

"I should hope so.."

"Steve's an absolute shithead and you could do better." Billy knows this isn't true. Steve is probably the most eligible person for Heather to date in this podunk town.

She's trying to glare at him now but lacks her usual fire. "Um, okay. I

mean, we had this conversation last time. And you're wrong. He's a nice guy."

"You can do better than a nice guy."

"Okay, like who?"

Like she doesn't know the answer. Billy hovers near her ear, arm on the fabric behind her, voice husky. "Me." Billy swears he sees her shiver.

"Um..."

He lets her flounder, watches her try to form words. He wonders whether or not he should put his hand on her shoulder. Maybe in a minute. "The fact that you haven't said anything at all says a lot, doesn't it?"

"I don't think it does?" She's beet red.

"I think you uh-" He runs his gaze over her. Makes sure he's obvious. "-kinda have the hots for me."

"No, I *don't*. Where are you getting that from?" She sounds really unconvincing to Billy's ears. It thrills him. It's more than enough reassurance.

"Hmm, let's *think*, Heather." Billy offers a sardonic smile, voice lilting. "Why did you ask *me* over your boyfriend for a ride after you've had a few drinks? Why am *I* the first guy you turn to? Seems strange, doesn't it?"

"I told you why *twice* already."

"You're a terrible liar." He cocks his head, teeth running over his bottom lip. "You're into me."

"You're full of yourself."

"I mean, sure, the alcohol brought it out in you. But I could tell since Teresa's party."

"What are you even talking about?" She scowls.

"You know *exactly* what I mean."

"Not at all." She leans down and picks up Rum-Tum Tugger, places him on her lap. Pets him too roughly while staring at the ground.

"Oh, I think you do."

"I'm into Steve." She inadvertently digs her fingers into Rum-Tum's fur and he bats at her in protest.

"Yeah. *Terrible* liar."

"Oh my god, I should have just walked."

"In this cold? Dumb idea." He pauses, waits for her reply. She's not talking. He eases up a bit, changes the focus. "Why couldn't your parents get you?"

"I hate asking them for anything. Also, I don't want them to know i've been drinking."

Billy gets that. He's never exactly thrilled when Neil finds him hammered. "Fair enough."

Her body's too tense. Demeanor icy. "We should go." In that instant he knows he's lost her, that he came on too strong. Wouldn't be the first time.

"Uh oh, you pissed me at me now?"

"I told you it was gonna happen." Heather smirks. She hops up from the couch and stands in one place for a few seconds, slightly swaying. "Woah...got up too fast."

He stands up quick and puts a hand on her shoulder to steady her. "You good?"

"I'm fine." She breathes. She grabs her coat from the arm of the couch, shoving her hands into the sleeves. Billy retreats his hand into his pocket and watches her pick up Rum-Tum-Tugger, disappearing

with him down a dark hallway.

Billy leans against a wall near the exit, fingering at the pack of Marlboros in his jacket lining. He needs a smoke *bad*. "Sorry you got pissed I guess." He mutters when she returns, walking her bike towards him.

"Wow, you're so sincere." She shoots back. Billy opens the door and waits for her outside as Heather flicks off all the lights.

"You should probably drink some water."

"I'm *fine*." Heather joins him in the cold, bike getting stuck in the doorway before she yanks it out. She locks the door behind her, shoulders hunched.

Billy wants to call her Ice Queen now to get a reaction but that wouldn't be entirely accurate. He's seen how she flares up when he calls her princess. She's probably only mad about it because it soaks her panties. Billy likes that thought too much.

It's okay. He hasn't lost yet. They still have the whole drive to her house.

In the car, engine running, bike crammed into the trunk, Billy finally gets his tobacco fix. As he exhales a thick haze, he rewinds his Slayer tape.

"Do we *have* to listen to metal again?" Heather's leaning towards him, already easing up on the cold shoulder. He can't blame her. The heat between them is melting his own defences pretty fast.

He fakes mock surprise. "I thought I'd converted you."

"No, it hurts my ears. Could we listen to something else?" She's giving him a look he'd only be able to describe as *high maintenance*. He likes it as much as he hates it. "Please?"

"Yeah, whatever." He's not usually one to give into a chick batting her lashes at him, but he's already done a lot more for her than he'd do for most.

She turns the radio on, moving the dial to some shitty pop station. Billy shifts gears and the car lurches into motion. He glares at her when "Carribean Queen" fills the air, cat-call whistles and all. He rolls down his window a few inches to flick out his ash.

"Really?" He sucks sharply on the last of his cigarette as they speed down the dark road.

"It's my turn to irritate you now." She gives him a cocky grin.

"How many turns do you need?" He slows down at a stop sign. Looks both ways purely for her benefit. "Pretty sure you've taken all of them."

"And do you hit on every girl that irritates you?"

"You're the exception." He winks at her to make her squirm. It works. "Doesn't hurt that you're easy on the eyes."

She doesn't respond, going flustered and quiet as the radio serenades them. Billy gets pissed at how cheesy and dumb the song is. Plus It's hard not relate every word to Heather somehow. *I lose my cool when she steps in the room, and I get so excited just from her perfume.* He shifts uncomfortably in his seat, tosses his cigarette butt out the window, already thinking about his next one.

Now Heather's leaning close to him again, challenge in her eyes. She's such a strange mix of shy and aggressive. He doubts he'll ever get used to it. "We should race."

Billy snorts. "You're still on that, are you?"

"Come on, how fast are you?"

"I dunno, pretty fast. I'm sure I'd beat any dude on the swim team easy. Those guys are fucking scrawny."

"This is why we need you on the team!" She bats at his arm. She reminds him of an eager puppy, nipping at his ankles. He can almost see her tail wagging. She's too cute.

"You're starting to annoy me, babe."

"Don't call me that."

"You love it." He grins. "Look, I'll race you if it'll get you to shut up about it. Just don't get mad when you lose."

"Yeah right. I'm gonna *win*." She oozes confidence.

Billy's ready to race her from her tone alone, his competitive nature kicking in. "So you're racing me just to show off."

"Maybe." She teases.

That does it. "Alright, tomorrow I'll race you."

"Lets go now."

"Now?" He can't *believe* this chick.

She laughs at his confusion. "Yeah, it'll be fun."

"You are *full* of surprises tonight." Though he has to admit, seeing Heather strip down to her underwear would be too perfect. He's getting hot under the collar just thinking about it.

"Not really, I've swam there before at night."

"You're such a little *rebel*." He imagines her sneaking out her mansion window, riding her bike down to the school to pick a lock and swim laps in the dark. "Anyone else know you're this fucking weird?"

"I'm not weird!" She pushes at his arm. "I just get bored."

"Don't you have a curfew?"

"Not until eleven. And it's only like nine-thirty now." Her eyes are pleading. "C'mon, we *have* to race."

Billy gives in. "Okay. I'll race you tonight. But if I win.." He offers her a dangerous leer. "..I get a prize."

"What kind of prize?" She looks at him skeptically.

He beams wide at her. "I get to kiss you."

Heather grips the armrest, does one of those breathy nervous laughs again. "Oh my *god*. You're so typical."

"It's the only way I'll do it." He shrugs.

She folds her arms, haughty-rich-girl mode enabled. "I mean, I'm gonna win so it's not like it matters."

Billy smirks. "Whatever you say, sweetheart."

"You're doing it again." Heather says in frustration. She's so damn easy to get riled up.

"What?"

"Calling me things."

He gives her his most seductive glance, eyes predatory. "Honestly, It's kinda automatic when I'm with a pretty girl." Also, he knows she'll keep her hands on him if he keeps provoking her. It's worked like a charm so far.

Her neck and cheeks bloom bright pink. "That's so lame."

Teasing her delights him way too much. She gets so flushed, so exasperated. Billy has to keep himself from staring at her, forcing his eyes on the road. He just *knows* she's wet. "You don't have to be ashamed of liking it, *princess*."

"I do not! You're so-"

"Then why are you blushing, *baby*?" He chuckles, waiting for her to paw at his arm again.

"Being embarrassed is not the same as enjoying it!" She huffs, poking at the fabric of his jacket.

"Fine." Billy turns a corner that'll take them directly to Hawkins High. He's actually getting pretty excited for this, body humming with anticipation.

"Just treat me like I'm one of the guys. Like I'm Steve or something."

If she's trying to provoke *him* now, it's working. "Then you *really* wouldn't like what I'd call you."

The Hawkins High School parking lot is deserted. Billy's wheels crunch over gravel that had been laid down since the last snowfall. He parks in his usual spot, feels weird at being at the same place he usually tries to leave as soon as possible. The radio's playing Tina Turner now. *I'm your private dancer, dancer for money, I'll do what you want me to do.* Billy holds back a laugh, snorts and rolls his eyes instead. They're *definitely* listening to Slayer when he drops her off.

He reaches an arm into the backseat, passes a clear bottle full of fluorescent blue liquid to Heather. "Drink this. Don't want you fainting on me like you almost did back there."

She analyzes the label. "Gatorade?"

"Gotta stay hydrated." He sparks up another cigarette. "Y'know, electrolytes and shit."

"I am pretty thirsty actually." Heather breaks the seal with a twist and gulps down almost the entire bottle in one go. She casually wipes her mouth off with the back of her hand. "Thanks."

"Jesus." Billy grabs the bottle from her, grinning. "Good thing I made you drink that. You would have drowned for sure." He pauses, exhaling a stream of smoke in her direction. "Real missed opportunity for mouth to mouth though." Heather doesn't dignify that with a response, just scoffs, shaking her head.

He swigs the last remnants and chucks the bottle behind him. "You ready"?

Heather's sporting a look that he's never seen before tonight. Pure arrogance.

"Let's do this."

Billy can't wait to kick her ass.

Author's Note: This story gets increasingly sexual from this point on,

so if you can't handle smut...well, this isn't the story for you lol. It says 'eventual smut' in the description for a reason ;) I'm hoping you guys will look forward to it!

6. Chapter 6

Chapter 6: Tide Is High.

Heather slips her key into the back door of the Hawkins High pool.

"How exactly is it that you have a key again?"

Heather shrugs. "I'm usually the last one to leave, so coach ended up giving me one so he wouldn't have to wait around for me."

"Let me guess, gotta work on your breaststroke?" Billy's eyes gleam at her. He's leaning against the cement wall of the building, watching Heather's downturned lashes.

Heather ignores his provocation. "Haven't lost a race yet."

The door opens and Billy sees the blue lights of the pool emanate in the dark. "Kinda creepy in here."

"Scared?" Heather shoots him a coy look and walks through the door.

"No, just is." Billy follows after her, a wave of chlorine smell hitting him. It's a huge place, with two large swimming pools. He wonders if Hawkins municipality spent their entire budget on their highschool swim team. He's not sure why he hasn't been in here yet. Maybe he didn't want the memories of his lifeguarding days to come ricocheting back to him. He knew the nostalgia would hurt him. It already does.

Heather reaches for the light switch. Billy darts his hand out over hers, her skin soft and cool under his palm.

"Let's leave them off."

"Why?"

"More fun that way." Billy's starts removing his leather jacket and boots, relishing the way Heather gawks at him as he strips down to his underwear. Thanks to the cold, he actually wore his black briefs

today. He's tempted to go completely nude but he knows she's not ready for that.

He walks to the pool edge. Looks over his shoulder at Heather with a smirk before diving sharp into the blue. It's a pleasant shock to his system. When he comes to the surface he whips his hair back with a deep inhale. "Jesus, that feels good." He treads water, sees Heather sliding off her jacket and folding it, placing it next to his messy pile. Billy glides towards her. He sets his elbows on the ledge, his eyes on her bold, provoking. She glances down at him sheepishly and slides her sweater and t-shirt over her head. Billy bites his bottom lip with a grin when he sees the lacy pink of her bra.

"Do you have to *watch* ?"

"Aren't you like, constantly half naked in front of the whole swim team?"

Heather plays with edge of her jeans before unbuttoning them. "They don't *stare* like that."

Billy flashes his teeth at her. "Maybe if you didn't do it so slow like you're fucking teasing me.."

Heather turns her body away in embarrassment. "Why do you *always* have to make things weird?" She leans over as she pulls her jeans down, like this isn't the best view he could possibly get right now. The sight of her matching pink panties hugging the round flesh of her ass makes his cock twitch.

Heather spins to face the pool and Billy's already impressed by her sleek dive into it. She comes up for air, wipes the water from her face. She swims up close next to him, cute as ever, and Billy has to hold back from putting his mouth on hers right then and there. He swears he sees a look in her eyes like she wants him to do exactly that.

"So, you ready to race or what?"

Billy gives her a provocative once-over. "Are *you* ready?"

"I've been training like crazy. I'm more than ready." Heather pauses

for a second, looking at the other pool behind him where there are multiple lanes. "You know what? We should do it super official. Like on the starting blocks."

He looks over his shoulder at the row of small platforms. "Sure."

Heather pulls herself out of the water, striding towards the diving blocks and Billy follows, gaze roving over the glistening skin of her back and bottom from behind, the fabric of her wet underwear clinging to her. He can't believe he's this lucky. She steps onto the platform. "You can do a flip turn, right?"

"Yeah, I can do a fucking turn." Billy gets up onto the block adjacent to her, runs his eyes over her dripping curves.

"And you've dived off one of these before..."

Billy glares at her. "Are you serious right now?"

Heather shoots him a grin. "Just wouldn't want you to embarrass yourself. Let's do a front crawl to the wall and back. You know, something *basic* that anyone could do."

"Aw, you're *cute* ." He schmoozes right back at her. "I'll try to go easy on you. I'd tell you not to cry after but something tells me you're a sore loser."

"You should count us in." Heather rests her hands on her knees. "Maybe it'll help give you a slight edge to make you feel better. Least I could do."

Billy smirks. "You're a real cocky one, aren't ya?"

"Only trying to help. Come on, count us in. Let's go."

Billy adjusts his weight on the board, leaning forward. "Get ready to pucker up, princess."

"Oh my *god*, just *do* it."

Billy gives a brief chuckle, then settles into starting position. "On your mark. Get set." Both of them tense into tight form. "Go ."

Billy breaks the surface, kicking into a smooth front crawl that's as natural as breathing. His arms and legs move in fluid tandem, head turning for a quick breath after several strokes. He's rusty, a fish out of water for months, but this is his *home* . A rush sets through his veins, a giddy sensation of freedom.

He reaches the other side and does a quick flip, pushing himself off the wall. He knows he said he'd take it easy on Heather but his competitive nature is kicking in. He revs up his momentum, and on his next breath he sees her right next to him. She's *good* . Billy pushes himself harder than he had anticipated, legs moving hard and strong, arms knifing into the surface.

When Billy closes in on the wall, his eyes are open and stinging under the water. He sees Heather touch it a quick moment before he does. He lifts his head out of the water with a gasp. He sees her clutching the wall, chest heaving.

"You're *fast* !" Heather blurts out, like she was expecting to leave him in the dust.

"Yeah, not fast enough." Billy grits out through hard breaths, hand running running over his face. "You're a fucking torpedo. Jesus."

Heather's radiating victory, glowing with pride. "Still, I'm surprised. You're not too bad."

"Yeah, hilarious." He holds onto the tile, wiping his hair back, playing it cool. "Well, congratulations, I guess."

"And I'm *still* kinda tipsy, i'm not even at full form." She brags.

"Yeah and I haven't been training like an Olympian for over a month."

Heather grins, dips under the pool divider and gets into his lane. "We should rematch. Like, when I'm totally sober, and after you've practiced for a bit."

"Yeah?"

She floats towards him, hand grazing the wall, mouth in a teasing smile. "Yeah, I'm gonna destroy you. Again."

Billy's dazed from how purely seductive she is in this moment. Gleaming-wet and confident, chocolate eyes flirting with him.

"Mmm, pretty *and* humble." Billy chuckles, getting closer, drawn to her like a magnet, their faces almost touching. There's a moment of stillness, a flare of desire between them that's unmistakable. It burns him. He can't move. Can't breathe.

Heather leans in first.

Her mouth is so soft. Wet and gentle against his. Before he knows it, his hand is on the back of her head, his tongue slipping between her lips. She opens to him easily, hungrily, wrapping her arms around his neck. She lets him lead her, his tongue gliding over hers, teeth pulling tenderly on her bottom lip before he kisses her slow.

She's so sweet, the way she sighs a little when he deepens the kiss, when he grazes his thumb across her jaw. It's such a tease, the way her skin slides on his under the water. She gets even closer, their bodies pressed tight together. She writhes slow and sensual against him and he groans faintly, his cock instantly hard against her belly. It doesn't seem real. It's too perfect.

She suddenly pulls away and the spell breaks. "We shouldn't-"

Billy jerks her back to him, presses his mouth firm against hers until she pushes at his chest.

"Billy, *stop* . We can't."

He releases her, confused, horny. "Why the hell not?"

"It's wrong."

Billy shouldn't be surprised. He should have seen this coming. It still pisses him off. "Feels pretty right to me. And from the way you were humping me I'm pretty sure you liked it."

Heather retreats back under the divider, putting a barrier between them. "I just don't like kissing someone else when I'm seeing Steve."

Billy snorts, anger unfurling in his gut. "*You kissed me* ."

"I-I messed up."

"What the fuck." Billy laughs harsh, words bitter. "Why the hell is this asshole so important to you? Does he give you good dick or something?"

Heather opens her mouth in shock. "Why would you ask me that? You're so perverted! "

"Why can't you answer the question?"

"Why are you so jealous?"

It *enrages* Billy when people accuse him of that. He ducks under the pool divider into her lane, running a hand through his wet hair, tone seething. "Are you trying to *make* me jealous? Are you *fucking* with me or something?"

Heather tenses up, looks helpless. "I'm sorry, I-"

"*You* call me up to give you a ride home." He closes in on her, eyes blazing. "Then *you* drag me here to fucking *swim* with you. And then after you say you're not into me, *you* kiss me. And *I'm* the sleazebag? Fuck off."

"I'm *really* sorry..." She almost whispers. She's starting to tear up.

Billy hates when chicks pull the crying card. Now he feels guilty for no reason. "Jesus, don't start the fucking waterworks."

"Then don't be mean to me." She looks away, lower lip quivering.

"Fuck." Billy breathes. He doesn't want to see her stupid tears right now. He stares at the ceiling for a few seconds, trying to collect himself. He suddenly feels really cold. "Alright. Whatever. I'm taking you home."

Billy hoists himself out of the pool in one quick motion and heads over to his pile of clothes. He pulls down his soaked briefs, not caring if she sees his dick, that he's still half hard. Actually, he wants her to. He struggles with his jeans as the wet of his legs impedes him. He looks behind him and sees Heather standing over her own clothes,

her back to him, undoing her bra. He can't stop another rush of desire hitting him.

"You're the most confusing chick I've ever fucking met." He fumes. "Where's Ms. Priss now? You play coy so well I almost believed you."

Her voice is tense, miserable. "I'm not going to wear wet underwear in the cold. Don't look at me."

"*Fine.*" He turns away from her, yanking the rest of his clothes onto his limbs. He's so mad at her he could scream. When he's finally dressed he leans against the wall facing the exit.. After a minute she comes up next to him, eyes down, looking cold and wet under her coat. Billy hates himself for wanting to hold her, kiss her again, make her stop looking so pathetic.

They silently exit the back door and Heather locks it behind her.

"I'm sorry." She says again. She looks guilty as hell. It makes him feel like shit.

Billy gnaws at the inside of his cheek. "Yeah, whatever. You had a few drinks, I guess."

"Um...yeah."

Billy feels like shit all the way to the car.

When Billy starts the engine of Camaro, he blasts heat and cranks up the music, barely registering that its fucking Culture Club. It doesn't cover the tension; the ride is wordless for several minutes. The night feels sharp, piercing into his skin. He wanted to kiss her but this is all wrong. He's strained everywhere, his chest tight. He needs a goddamn cigarette.

"I don't know what came over me." She says softly.

Billy exhales hard through his nose, glaring at the road. "It's not fucking rocket science, Heather."

She breathes out slow, anxious hands wringing. Billy doesn't know what to say to her. Wouldn't talk to her even if he did, his ego

hovering on obliteration. He didn't think of what would happen *after* they kissed. Never anticipated the rage and resentment he would feel when she pulled away and claimed loyalty to Steve over him. He never thought of the possibilities, the consequences. He was stupid, only thinking with his dick again. Doesn't help that she beat him at something he's pretty good at too. Fucking bitch. He should have just taken her home right away.

The Camaro lurches to a stop in front of her big house, and once again Billy hates the sight of it. He's out the door before Heather even takes off her seatbelt. He wrenches the bike out of the trunk, thrusts it into her arms when she trudges near to him, looking little-girl-lost.

"I really like you, you know." Heather's voice is choked. "I'm just...confused."

Billy looks somewhere in the distance, avoiding her gaze. His teeth worry at his lower lip for a second before he mutters. "Yeah. I know."

"I *am* attracted to you." She confesses. "Like, a lot."

Billy can't help how his breath catches. He hides it with a sneer. "Obviously."

"I just need to think about this."

"Do whatever the hell you want." Billy shrugs. "Not my problem."

"I'm sorry..." She meets his gaze, puppy dog eyes glistening. "I messed up."

She really needs to stop pulling that cute and pitiful shit on him. It's making him want to kiss her better. "Jesus, It's *fine*. Just forget about it, alright." He slams the trunk shut, starts circling to the driver's seat.

"I don't know if I can." He hears her mumble, voice tinged with longing.

Billy stops in his tracks, feeling a crackle of heat in his body. He looks back at her, predatory glint in his eye again. But cruel this time. Vengeful. "Well, baby-" He yanks his door open. "Guess you're just gonna have to fucking deal."

He's in the car before Heather can say anything else, door slamming, engine revving. He whips out onto the road, riding fast and dangerous down her street. When he glances in his rear view mirror, she's gone, only the dark road behind him.

Billy's in the forest. Dark, green and dewy. His bare feet pass over dirt and rock, wet pebble, rough sand. He's been here before.

He ducks down under branches. It's pitch black but he can see clearly. Branch and vine. Branch and vine. A soft wash of sound hums in his ears. Waves lapping. He's naked. It's warm.

He sees a glimmer of light in the distance, ethereal, prickling through leaves. Hears a laugh, bell-like. He turns toward it. Sees movement, a radiant star rushing through trees. He follows it, feels it drawing him in. He's deep in wet thicket, his hands pushing at branches that open around him like a gateway. Bramble brushes his skin, moisture dripping into his eyes. His feet slide in mud.

He bursts onto the other side. He sees vast ocean under a full moon big and bright. Wind blows at him. Warm. Inviting. Salt air and seaweed. He walks slowly towards the incoming tide. Finally home. Finally.

Heather is at the ocean's edge. Standing naked and pure in the moon's glow. Hair long and wild, rippling behind her like the water that flows over her feet. She reaches an arm out to him. He's at her side. Takes her hand in his. Her skin shimmers like opal.

"You came." She whispers.

"I had to." His mouth doesn't move. She understands.

She smiles, motioning towards the dark expanse of ocean. "Look."

The waves light up in phosphorescent blues. Neon and unearthly. Illuminating the darkness. Moving in rhythmic color towards them. They splash over his feet and he laughs. It's been so long since he's seen this.

"It's like magic." She squeezes his hand.

"Red tide. Happens every once in awhile. Mom used to take me down here

to see it."

Heather's eyes are deep. They tell him everything. "You'll see it again."

She's so beautiful. Billy wraps his arms around her and kisses her. Her skin warm and wet against his. He feels her melt into him. She tastes like ocean, like moonlight. He's afraid if he stops, it'll end.

She starts to dissolve into sparkling ether, as luminous as the water.

"Don't go." He holds her tight. His vision is swimming. He can't see a thing. She's going to vanish from his arms.

He feels her soft palm on his cheek.

"I'm right here."

BILLY!

Billy wakes up with a jolt. Susan is knocking at his door, calling to him.

"Billy. "

"What..." He groans, reality sledgehammering him in the face. He plants his pillow over his head, burrowing into the covers. He can still smell sea water, feel lips pressed to his.

"I *said*, phone's for you. It's that girl again."

"What? "

"That same girl that called last time. Could you *please* tell her not to call this early? Neil almost had a fit."

The mention of Neil startles him to sharp clarity.

"Jesus Christ." He tears back his blankets, shoving his legs into pajama bottoms. He staggers towards the kitchen, grabbing the phone off the counter. Susan's rummaging through cupboards next to him for cereal. He turns away from her and places the phone against

his ear.

"Are you *insane*?" He hisses through clenched teeth.

"I had to talk to you." Heather says weakly.

"At six in the goddamn morning?" Billy keeps glancing behind him at Susan. Eyes scanning the dining room. Neil's not here. He breathes a sigh of relief.

"It's a Monday. Aren't you up by now?"

"Now I am." He snaps. He tries to keep his voice low, but Susan is looking at him suspiciously. "What is it?"

"Um.." Her voice cracks. She clears her throat. "I broke up with Steve."

Billy nearly implodes. Heart stopping. He can't say anything, throat dried up.

Heather continues nervously. "I just...needed to tell you."

"When did this happen?" He runs a hand through his hair, breathing out shakily. He's sweating.

"Last night."

Billy's palm slides down his face. He feels dizzy. He's not sure whether he's still dreaming or not. "Okay. Well. Thanks for sharing, I guess. Did this really warrant a phone-call?"

"Maybe." She's silent for a moment. "And..um.. I think you're going to get mad at what I'm about to ask you next..."

"Probably."

He hears her exhale hard. "...Can I have a ride to school?"

Billy would throw the phone across the room if it wasn't attached to a cord. " *Jesus*. You *are* insane."

"My bike chain is still broken..." She protests. He can almost see her

giving him those puppy-dog eyes again.

"Can't your butler take you or something?" He's winding the phone cord around his hand, muscles tense, pushing at Max's skateboard with his foot. It rolls across the floor, slowing down before it hits the wall with a light thud.

"We don't *have* a butler. And I feel weird asking my parents for a ride."

"And you don't feel weird asking *me*?" Billy grits out. He can't turn her down for some reason though. Maybe because he just dreamed of her being an ethereal light being a few minutes ago. "Fuck. Fine. I'll drive you. Just get your chain fixed, alright. Or get a goddamn car."

"When will you be here?"

"Fuck, I dunno." He sighs. He glances at the clock on the wall. "Like quarter to eight."

"Okay. I'll see you in a bit." She says lightly, voice laced with anxiety. "Um. Thanks again for the ride."

"Yeah, whatever." Billy slams the phone down in the cradle. Susan jumps, touches his arm as he walks by, eyebrows raised at him. Billy snorts, heads to his room. He resists slamming the door off its hinges.